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DEPT PASS TO PEACE CORPS FOR DIRECTOR TSCHETTER FROM  
AMBASSADOR CAMERON HUME

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: THE PEACE CORPS IN INDONESIA

¶1. (SBU) Dear Director Tschetter, I want to thank you personally for sending the superb Peace Corps Assessment Team here to Indonesia last February. The Team was able to travel through six provinces over two weeks and meet a wide variety of local leaders, international volunteers, and government officials while observing outstanding programs and communities. The many people they met still warmly recall their visit and wait in anticipation for a new Peace Corps program in Indonesia. The Assessment Team themselves expressed surprise at the 30-year absence of the Peace Corps in such an ideal environment. The Team saw first hand what we in Indonesia see every day: the incredible diversity, positive potential, and genuine need for a Peace Corps program in Indonesia. A Peace Corps presence in Indonesia would clearly be a win-win for both sides.

¶2. (SBU) We were disappointed to learn the Assessment Team did not recommend Peace Corps entry at this time, due to security concerns, despite the conclusion that Indonesia is ideal in every other way. As the world's largest Muslim-majority nation and a tolerant, modern democracy, Indonesia does indeed provide an ideal environment to, "encourage development and education and opportunity in the Islamic world" as President Bush called for in his 2002 State of the Union speech. Indonesia also provides the ideal environment for the work that Peace Corps Volunteers do so well: promote a better understanding of Americans and America in the countries served and gain a better understanding of the culture in which they serve.

¶3. (SBU) As a former Peace Corps Volunteer yourself, you understand the deep personal impact brought about by two cultures living and working side by side. As an RPCV myself, I believe the time has come for Peace Corps to re-enter and re-engage this moderate Muslim democracy. To that end, I urge you to send an Assessment Team to Indonesia to address any security concerns that you may have. Together we can find solutions to protect the safety and security of Volunteers while enabling them to carry out their important work in Indonesian communities.

¶4. (SBU) The threat of terrorism is a serious concern in Indonesia, as it is in many countries in which the Peace Corps operates. Just as in Thailand and the Philippines, there are parts of Indonesia where Peace Corps Volunteers could not work. The Mission treats security concerns very seriously and Mission Security is robust and proactive in monitoring security conditions and disseminating security information to Mission personnel and to the estimated 10,000 Americans that live and work in Indonesia. Regional Security Officers (RSOs) work closely with Indonesian National Police (INP), foreign Missions, and security personnel at private organizations to gather information, mitigate threats and protect Mission personnel. RSOs also brief incoming personnel and conduct community outreach to over 500 Mission personnel and hundreds of USG visitors, in large cities and remote destinations, from Aceh to Papua

¶5. (SBU) There are more than 120 USG funded Americans working independently throughout Indonesia. Most analogous to Peace Corps Volunteers are the forty-two English Language Fellows (ELFs) and English Teaching Assistants (ETAs). ETA and ELF Fulbright programs place recently graduated students in villages and universities throughout the archipelago with little contact with Americans or urban areas. Much like Peace Corps Volunteers, ELFs and ETAs are encouraged to become a part of their local communities and cooperate

with local leaders for program success. Their security largely comes from their close ties to the communities in which they live, however there is regular contact between them and the regional security officer. This year we doubled the number of people participating in this program, including sending people for the first time to the province of Ambon. To date the ETA and ELF programs have proved to be so successful, the demand for these volunteers is ten times the supply. Peace Corps Volunteers can help fill some of the need.

¶6. (SBU) Other organizations, such as Volunteers in Asia (VIA), Australian, and UN Volunteers, place many volunteers throughout Indonesia and follow similar security procedures. UN Volunteers are concentrated in Indonesia's underdeveloped eastern regions, including Papua. These volunteers receive security briefings, frequent updates, and are issued failsafe radios for regular security checks. If needed, local police are also alerted to their presence. To date, both VIA and UN Volunteers plan to expand their programs and are committed to serving local communities in more remote areas of Indonesia.

¶7. (SBU) Robert Taft once said, "In the Peace Corps we present a different image of America. The Peace Corps breaks down the stereotypes and turns an American into a fellow human being." And all it takes is one American in a local community to do so. In Central Java, a young American teacher with Volunteers in Asia lives and teaches art at a local Islamic boarding school. I have attached an article about this young man showing the difference in community perceptions and his perceptions in one short year. He is winning hearts and minds, and no where is it more necessary to, "extend the compassion of our country", and "renew the promise of the Peace Corps," than in this modern Muslim-majority nation of 240 million people. The Peace Corps prides itself on the dynamic, innovative and intrepid nature of the men and women who volunteer and Indonesia offers a public service opportunity commensurate with those traits. No country is without risk, but measured against the enormous potential positive impact, Mr. Director, Indonesia deserves a second look. I hope to welcome an Assessment Team to Indonesia this fall.